

WESTTOWN, PA—Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) spoke at a “plugging-in” ceremony for a new solar panel installation at the Westtown School. The panels, funded in part by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Energy Harvest program, will offset the school’s electricity costs by as much as \$10,000 annually and will be used as an educational and research opportunity for the school.

“I want to congratulate Westtown School for this great initiative, which sets a fine example for its students and our community,” said Congressman Sestak. “Our global environment is at a tipping point; we must reduce greenhouse emissions, stop global warming now, and end our nation’s dependence on foreign oil and our often careless disregard for precious natural resources. By implementing these technologies now, and by giving our children the education they need in science and math to develop the technologies of the future, we can protect, and begin to restore, our environment.”

The solar panel, installed on the roof of the school’s new athletic facility, is expected to generate 55,000-60,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year, offsetting the school’s future electricity costs by as much as \$10,000 annually. Westtown School received a grant for \$145,000 from the state as part of its Energy Harvest program, and received another \$145,000 in matching funds from a group of anonymous Westtown donors.

The solar cell array will be an important educational tool to examine renewable energy sources such as solar power. An educational display in the Athletic Center lobby monitors and displays in real time the energy being generated and its monetary savings to the school. Students and their teachers in Westtown’s advanced computer, physics, and environmental science classes will research existing monitoring equipment on the solar market, then create their own monitoring and reporting mechanisms that will not only measure raw performance output of the system, but will also communicate performance in user-friendly ways through graphs, digital read-outs of kWh production and use, pollutants avoided, and comparisons of different months of solar production. Both the raw data and the analysis of it will also be linked to the school’s website, providing inspiration to other schools in promoting more sustainable electricity use on their campuses.

Congressman Sestak has made the Nation’s environmental security a legislative priority. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act contains \$3.1 billion for State Energy Program Formula Grants (including \$99.7 million for Pennsylvania). A large part of that funding will go to more Harvest grants, to fund projects similar to this one.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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